

**Maine Department of Health  
and Human Services**

**Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner**

[www.maine.gov/dhhs](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs)

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**Maine Earns Prestigious Distinction from the National Safety Council for Addressing  
Opioid Abuse**

*Maine becomes just one of five states to earn highest marks in NSC report*

AUGUSTA— Due to our comprehensive efforts to address opioid abuse, Maine has now joined an elite group of states to earn a “Making Progress” distinction from the [National Safety Council](http://www.nsc.org), the highest rating bestowed by the Council in its *Prescription Nation* report. Only four other states – Kentucky, New Mexico, Tennessee and Vermont – earned a “Making Progress” rating in the report, which grades states based on six key indicators proven to effectively address opioid abuse.

The July 29 enactment of Public Law [Chapter 488](#) gave Maine the fifth indicator it needed to earn the “Making Progress” mark.

**5 Key Indicators Maine Achieved:**

- ✓ Mandatory Prescriber Education
- ✓ Opioid Prescribing Guidelines
- ✓ Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs
- ✓ Increased Access to Naloxone
- ✓ Availability of Opioid Use Disorder Treatment

“To effectively address the opiate crisis in Maine and save the lives of Mainers battling substance abuse, we must target the root causes of this crisis,” said Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Mary Mayhew. “With more than 70% of those addicted to heroin having started with a legally prescribed pain pill, these new prescription limits on pain pills will both change the way our physicians treat pain and prevent others from becoming addicted to prescription pain pills and heroin. The NSC’s recognition speaks volumes about the work being done in Maine to combat this deadly epidemic.”

“We are losing nearly 19,000 people across the country every year to prescription opioid overdoses, and the cost of this epidemic is too high for states to watch from the sidelines,” said Deborah A.P. Hersman, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. “We commend Maine for prioritizing this issue and taking proven steps that will save lives.”

Overprescribing of opioids has fueled the number of overdose deaths in Maine. In 2014, 350,000 Mainers were prescribed a total of 80 million opioid painkillers – almost one quarter of the population. The Chapter 488 legislation addresses overprescribing by putting dosage restrictions on new prescriptions, requiring physicians to check the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program before prescribing opioids, limiting the duration of opioid treatment for both chronic and acute pain<sup>[i]</sup> and requiring continuing education for opioid prescribers.

The National Safety Council, a leader in opioid safety education and advocacy, identified six key actions, or indicators, that will have immediate and sustained impact if states implement them. The Council performed an exhaustive evaluation of the data and research into effective prevention strategies, ranking all 50 states based on their efforts in those [six key areas](#). Twenty-eight states were given a “failing” rating, and no state met all six indicators. Maine now joins the top five states with a “Making Progress” rating.

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<sup>[i]</sup> There are exceptions for cancer patients and end-of-life and hospice care, along with palliative care